



King County

Regional Veterans Court Pilot Report 2014

**King County District Court
Regional Veterans Court**

September 2014

Table of Contents

Section I: The History of Veteran Treatment Courts	1
Section II: Overview of the Development of Regional Veterans Court in King County	1
Section III: Overview of King County’s Veterans Court	2
Section IV: What is the experience of the veteran opting into Regional Veterans Court?	3
Section V: Regional Veterans Court Mission, Goals, and Support.....	5
A. Regional Veterans Court model	5
B. Regional Veterans Court staffing	6
C. Outputs/Outcomes	9
Section VI: Regional Veterans Court Moving Forward	10
Attachments.....	11
Attachment A: Opening Celebration Program for Regional Veterans Court (June 2012).....	12
Attachment B: First Annual Celebration Program for Regional Veterans Court (November 2013)	14
Attachment C: Comments from Interviews with RVC Staff	17



Section I: The History of Veteran Treatment Courts

In 2008, Judge Robert Russell in Buffalo, New York, launched the nation's first Veterans Treatment Court (VTC), giving rise to what has become a national movement. VTC was born of the observation that increasing numbers of veterans involved in the criminal justice system were presenting with serious mental health and substance use disorders. Over the following six years, as many as 120 additional jurisdictions started or planned to start VTCs. VTCs are therapeutic courts in the tradition of drug and mental health courts that emphasize treatment rather than incarceration, utilize a non-adversarial approach to working with the court participant, and strive to restore the participant's sense of pride, camaraderie, and community by tapping in to the unique aspects of military and veteran culture.

The VTC movement is consistent with the long tradition of offering special programs and preferences to individuals who have served their country in the United States Military or National Guard and Reserves. VTCs combine the resources of local criminal justice systems with the medical, mental health, and addiction services provided by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). As a community and governmental entity, King County is cognizant of the needs of veterans and has supported development and expansion of programs and services for veterans by twice passing the Veterans and Human Services Levies. In fact, King County has been recognized at a national level by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for the county's Veterans Justice Initiative: "... [C]ommunities such as Buffalo (NY) and King County (WA) have implemented strategies for intercepting veterans with trauma and mental conditions as they encounter law enforcement or are processed through the courts. ...most communities do not know where to begin even if they recognize the problem."¹

Section II: Overview of the Development of Regional Veterans Court in King County

In 2011, the King County Council passed a proviso in the County budget convening an interdepartmental task force to study various options for operating a Veterans Court. The Office of Performance Strategy and Budget (PSB) worked in collaboration with staff from all criminal justice agencies (i.e., Superior Court, District Court, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office and the Department of Public Defense), the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS), the King County Council, and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) staff to prepare a report on the feasibility of and a plan for implementation of a pilot project for providing specialty court services for veterans. The task force considered five options for the operations of a Veterans Court and recommended that the County pilot a Regional Veterans Court (RVC) in 2012, funded within the existing resources of the King County Regional Mental Health Court (RMHC).

¹ Gains Center Consensus report: Responding to the needs for Justice Involved Combat Veteran with Service-Related Trauma and Mental Health Conditions @ http://justiceforvets.org/sites/default/files/files/GAINS%20Report%5B1%5D_0.pdf

Once this recommendation was adopted by the County Council, an executive steering committee was established within the District Court to draft the RVC mission statement and policies, with monthly meetings starting in September 2011. The Veterans Court Executive Committee (VCEC) included representatives of the RMHC, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Department of Public Defense, County mental health and substance abuse staff, state and federal Department of Veteran Affairs, Probation, and King County Council staff. A staff steering committee from the RMHC also volunteered to work on the day-to-day operations necessary for the opening of the court. These groups continue to meet on an as-needed basis. As a result of these efforts, the RVC formally opened on June 14, 2012, providing a weekly RVC calendar on Thursday afternoons.

In preparation for the implementation of the RVC, the team applied for and obtained a training grant from the National Association of Drug Court Professionals (NADCP). The RVC team received three days of training at the Seattle courthouse and participated in a site visit at the Orange County Veterans Treatment Court. These events took place in October and November 2013. As a result of this training opportunity, the team learned numerous best practices for working with veterans in a therapeutic court setting, established a plan to develop an operations manual, and initiated the process of developing a mentor program.

Because the RVC operates within the existing RMHC, which has been in operation since 1999, it has been able to capitalize and build on the County's rich experience and expertise with therapeutic courts. While the RMHC clinical eligibility criteria of persistent and severe mental illness had previously excluded some veterans from participation in RMHC, the development of the RVC calendar expanded clinical eligibility criteria to include diagnoses of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). The RVC's broad definition of "veteran" also expanded eligibility for participation. Specifically, the RVC defines a veteran as any individual who has served in and been discharged from the Active Duty, Reserve, or National Guard component of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard, so long as he or she is eligible for VA health care services. All veterans are considered for participation in the RVC regardless of the origin of their diagnoses, which may or may not be connected to their military service or combat. Additionally, the RVC will serve any eligible veteran so long as appropriate treatment is available to address the veteran's therapeutic needs.

Section III: Overview of King County's Veterans Court

The Veterans Treatment Court model requires regular court appearances as well as mandatory attendance at treatment appointments and frequent and random testing for substance use. The court is organized to mimic the structured environment inherent in active military service. Veteran participants attend court together and observe each other's hearings, forming a cohort similar to a military unit. The judge acts in a quasi-commanding officer role, giving feedback and clear direction to participating veterans.

In the RVC, the veteran appears regularly before the same judge who understands the unique needs of that particular veteran. The RVC experience is different from a regular courtroom experience due to the therapeutic focus of the court. As litigants in a therapeutic court, the attorneys collaborate with one another and with the probation and VA staff. This team approach

fosters creative ideas about how to provide encouragement, positive reinforcement, and educational opportunities for the veterans.

The RVC is a mixed jurisdiction court. It serves unincorporated areas of King County as well as the municipalities within the County. The prosecutor in each city can request that a municipal case be reviewed for eligibility for the RVC. If the defendant is determined to be eligible and amenable to participation, the City Prosecutor can transfer the case to the County Prosecutor for refile in the RVC. Once the RVC case is filed, the City dismisses the case. From that point on, all matters are addressed in the RVC.

The RVC also has the capacity to accept referrals from the Superior Court if the prosecutor determines that it is appropriate to refile a pending felony as a misdemeanor. These felony cases that are moved from the Superior Court to the District Court are carefully screened to ensure public safety as well as confirm that the RVC diagnostic criteria are met.

In all RVC cases, the evidence is reviewed and assessed by the court clinician and prosecuting attorney to determine whether there is a nexus between the diagnosis and criminal act and to confirm that the veteran is willing and motivated to seek treatment and to be supervised by a probation officer for a period of time up to two years.

As a part of the screening process, the veteran is assessed for the following:

- the nature of the criminal behavior;
- history of prior criminal conduct;
- the nexus between the criminal behavior and diagnostic criteria;
- chemical dependency; and
- mental illness.

The court clinician coordinates with the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator (VJOC) to link eligible veterans with treatment services at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The VJO continues to act as a liaison between the court, the veteran, and the VHA throughout the veteran's participation in the RVC program.

Section IV: What is the experience of the veteran opting into Regional Veterans Court?

After the court clinician completes the initial screening for RVC eligibility, the court clinician immediately begins to coordinate with the VJOC to enroll the veteran in VHA healthcare and VA behavioral health treatment tailored to the veteran's presenting issues. Simultaneously, if appropriate, the court clinician assists the veteran in linking with the Washington Department of Veteran Affairs (WDVA) and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) to obtain benefits, and coordinates with the VJOC and WDVA to obtain clean and sober housing for the veteran. The initial screening and this linkage to treatment, housing, and benefits is all part of the pre-opt-in process.

Throughout this pre-opt-in process, the veteran is in continuous contact with his or her attorney, and is able to obtain legal advice whenever requested. Once the team has assessed the veteran's eligibility and amenability, and the veteran has decided – in consultation with counsel – to participate in the program, an opt-in hearing is scheduled. The duration of time between the initial screening and opt-in varies, but generally is between four to six weeks. This pre-opt-in period provides the RVC team sufficient time to develop and coordinate an effective and holistic treatment plan in collaboration with the veteran, and provides the veteran and the court sufficient time to determine whether the RVC is a good fit. At the opt-in hearing, the court clinician introduces the veteran to the judge and the other veterans present at the RVC for a review hearing, and the judge presents a welcome coin to the veteran to signify the start of the veteran's participation in RVC.

During the initial four to eight weeks after opt-in, each new participant is expected to attend RVC on a weekly basis. At the court sessions, all of the veterans remain in the courtroom for the entire duration of the calendar. This allows the veterans to develop a sense of camaraderie, reconnect with positive aspects of military culture, and have sufficient time to check in with members of the RVC team (i.e., the RVC defense attorney, defense social worker, VJOC, court clinician, and/or probation officer) if necessary.

During the course of the court calendar, each veteran is called to the bench to join the defense and prosecuting attorneys. Probation provides the judge with a report of the veteran's progress in treatment, accomplishments, and any challenges that may be impacting the veteran's treatment progress. The judge and other team members provide praise and encouragement to the veteran for his/her treatment progress and accomplishments. If the veteran has experienced setbacks or has violated the terms of his/her probation, the judge provides the veteran with feedback and considers potential sanctions proposed by the team. Examples of sanctions include a warning from the judge, an assigned research or reflection paper on a specific topic, the imposition of community service hours, more frequent review hearings, additional meetings with the assigned probation officer, more frequent urinalysis testing, transdermal alcohol monitoring via a secure ankle bracelet, and more frequent treatment appointments. Only in severe situations where there is an issue of public safety and/or safety of the veteran is jail considered as a possible sanction. It is the philosophy of the RVC that all efforts are to be made to keep the veteran in the community, where he or she can benefit from employment, treatment, and family support. In accordance with this philosophy, the RVC team always considers alternatives to jail, including work release, electronic home monitoring, and participation in the Community Corrections Alternative Program (CCAP) intensive outpatient treatment program.

After the initial phase of attending court on a weekly basis and participation in the court requirements successfully, the veteran's required attendance in court is reduced to bi-monthly and eventually monthly review hearings. The veteran continues to meet regularly with his/her probation officer, defense attorney, and other veteran participants during the court calendars until his/her requirements are completed and he/she is recommended for graduation.

The RVC is in the process of developing a mentor program in order to provide additional support to participating veterans. The mentor program is expected to maximize the camaraderie that often develops among veterans in RVC and supplement the support the veteran receives through the RVC team and his/her clinical providers. While the mentor program is still in the initial

phase of development, the intention is to recruit veterans in the community to volunteer as mentors to RVC participants. The mentor's role will be to serve as coach, guide, role model, and social support to RVC participants. Training will be developed and provided to mentors to optimize the success of the mentor program for RVC participants and the mentor program's volunteers. Recruitment efforts are expected to include the County's veteran service organizations.

Section V: Regional Veterans Court Mission, Goals, and Support

A. Regional Veterans Court model

The RVC mission is to serve veterans and the public by:

- Addressing the underlying issues that have resulted in a veteran being referred to the criminal justice system;
- Providing a courtroom environment that is supportive and respectful of the veteran and the victim, and conducive to reaching a successful outcome in every case; and
- Striving to increase public safety through a collaborative, team-based approach that includes the veteran and incorporates individualized treatment plans, close monitoring, and creative approaches to resolve difficult issues.

The program's goals are to:

- Increase the use of appropriate treatment for veterans, thereby reducing the use of jail, emergency rooms, and hospitals;
- Divert veterans from further involvement in the criminal justice system; and
- Provide linkages for veterans to services offered by the VA.

The current eligibility criteria for the program are as follows:

- Criminal charges originating in King County;
- Individual currently meets the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, TBI, or a severe and persistent mental illness;
- Individual received an honorable discharge or general discharge under honorable circumstances and is eligible for VA health care services; and
- Individual demonstrates a willingness and ability to engage in treatment and probation and abide by court conditions.

In order to accomplish the mission and goals of the RVC, the court operates within the 10 key components that have been developed by the National Association of Drug Court Professionals:

1. Integration of alcohol, drug treatment, mental health treatment, medical services with justice system case processing;

2. Use of a non-adversarial approach to promote public safety while protecting participants' due process rights;
3. Early identification of and prompt placement of eligible participants;
4. Access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, mental health and rehabilitation services;
5. Use of frequent alcohol and drug testing to monitor abstinence;
6. Coordination and communication among team members to inform the Court's responses to compliant and non-compliant behavior;
7. Ongoing judicial interaction with each veteran;
8. Monitoring and evaluation are used to measure the achievement of program goals and gauge effectiveness;
9. Continuing interdisciplinary education to promote effective Court planning, implementation, and operations; and
10. Forging partnerships among the Veterans Administration, public agencies, and community-based organizations to generate local support and enhances Court effectiveness.

B. Regional Veterans Court staffing

The following RVC team members comprise the core staff:

1. Judge: The Honorable Johanna Bender (Johanna.Bender@kingcounty.gov)

Research indicates that the relationship between the veteran and the judge is a major influence in whether a participant complies with a comprehensive treatment program. The judge oversees the team and executive committee, provides direction in program and policy development, presides over RVC hearings, and engages in community networking on behalf of the RVC.



2. King County District Court Regional Mental Health Court/Regional Veterans Court Manager: Betsy Bosch (Betsy.Bosch@kingcounty.gov)

The court manager is responsible for program operations. This includes data collection and analysis, grant writing, contract review and negotiation, coordination of team business meetings and trainings, responding to questions from the public, coordinating visits to the RVC, and working closely with the RVC judge to address administrative issues.

3. King County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Regional Mental Health Court/Regional Veterans Court: Manka Dhingra, Supervisor (Manka.Dhingra@kingcounty.gov); Pete DeSanto (Pete.Desanto@kingcounty.gov); Pascal Herzer (Pascal.Herzer@kingcounty.gov)

The prosecuting attorney is responsible for reviewing district court, city, and superior court cases for eligibility. The prosecutor works collaboratively with court clinicians and defense counsel in screening for program eligibility and coordinating the development of treatment plans. The prosecutor files charges into the court, attends pre-court staffing, and advocates for treatment compliance.

4. Victim's Advocate: Kathy Rice (PAOMHC@kingcounty.gov)

The RVC victim's advocate is an employee of the King County prosecuting attorney's office. She consults with crime victims to assess and address victim safety concerns, along with their short- and long-term needs, including protection orders and restitution. She provides direct services to victims in all stages of prosecution by linking the victim to key players in the criminal justice system and appropriate community resources. She works to ensure that victim rights are honored in the court system and that victims have the opportunity to be heard as they may wish.

5. Defense Attorneys, Regional Mental Health Court/Regional Veterans Court: Abbey Perkins, Lead Defense Team Attorney (Abbey.Perkins@kingcounty.gov) and Heidi Rettinghouse (Heidi.Rettinghouse@kingcounty.gov)

The defense attorneys interview RVC clients, assess their legal cases and defenses, and advise clients about their legal rights and options. They also communicate with the team, treatment providers, and the court to advocate for veterans throughout their time in the RVC program.

6. Defense Social Worker: Heather McIntyre (Heather.Mcintyre@kingcounty.gov)

The defense social worker assists veterans with obtaining social services including housing and treatment services, and coordinates treatment planning with the VHA staff. The defense social workers are a source of information and support for RVC participants.

7. Court Clinician Services Team: Ethan Seracka, clinical supervisor (Ethan.Seracka@kingcounty.gov); Katherine Pfundheller, court clinician (Katherine.Pfundheller@kingcounty.gov)

The court clinician screens all referred veterans for clinical eligibility. The clinician obtains the appropriate releases to gather collateral information regarding the veteran, including treatment history and legal history. The court clinician is responsible for providing the court with an opinion about the veteran's competency, eligibility for program participation, and amenability to treatment. Once the RVC program screening is completed, the clinician provides an initial treatment plan tailored to the veteran's needs. The court clinician maintains regular contact with the veteran and provides status updates to the court until the defendant decides to opt-in to the RVC program. The court clinician

services are provided through a contract by Sound Mental Health and in partnership with DCHS's Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division (MHCADSD).

8. Community Supervision/Probation: Jim Phoenix, King County District Court Probation (Jim.Phoenix@kingcounty.gov) and Susan Butler, King County District Court Probation (Susan.Butler@kingcounty.gov)

Once the veteran opts into the RVC program, the veteran is placed on an active probation supervision with a probation mental health specialist. The probation mental health specialist meets with the client on a regular basis, monitors the veteran's progress and compliance with court conditions, and provides guidance and assistance to enhance success. The probation mental health specialist collects data regarding treatment attendance and urinalysis testing results, reports to the team in the pre-court meetings, and presents status updates to the court. At a minimum, the veteran will meet with their probation mental health specialist once per month, generally with more frequent contact during the initial stages of the program.

9. Equal Justice Works Fellow: Leo Flor (LeoF@nwjustice.org)

Microsoft and Fenwick & West LLP sponsor an Equal Justice Works Fellow employed by Northwest Justice Project to provide complementary civil legal aid for low-income, justice-involved veterans. Any team member may refer an RVC veteran for assistance with civil legal issues whose resolution supports the veteran's recovery and success in the court. Common issues include discharge upgrades, license reinstatement, and making child support income-appropriate.

10. Budget Analyst: Elly Slakie, King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget (Elly.Slakie@kingcounty.gov)

The King County Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget has dedicated staff time to assist with the evaluation of the program. The analyst is able to meet with the RVC team staff to discuss the goals for an evaluation.

11. Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Specialists: Kevin Devine (Kevin.Devine@va.gov) and Dianna Belletti (Dianna.Belletti@va.gov)

The US Department of Veteran Affairs provides support to the ongoing operation of the RVC through the Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative, a national VA program that was developed to provide outreach services to veterans involved in the criminal justice system. Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators (VJOs) are VA healthcare providers who regularly attend RVC hearings and provide case management services and assistance with accessing VA health care and housing services, provide information to the RVC about treatment participation and compliance, and ensure that RVC staff are informed about veterans issues and available resources.

12. Veterans Justice Initiative Coordinator: Chelsea Baylen
(Chelsea.Baylen@kingcounty.gov)

The Veterans Justice Initiative (VJI) Coordinator is an employee of King County's MHCADSD. Ms. Baylen coordinates the local justice system with the veterans services system (federal, state, and local) and manages the contracts for re-entry case management for justice-involved veterans and court clinician services for the veterans courts in King County (which includes the court clinician's contract with the RVC program). These VJI programs are designed to ensure justice-involved veterans have access to the benefits and services they need to successfully return to their communities, reach their full potential, and prevent future involvement in the criminal justice system.

C. Outputs/Outcomes and a Profile of the Defendants Served

The RVC was projected to serve 15 defendants in its pilot year, which began June 2012. As of July 31, 2014, 52 veterans have opted into the RVC, comprised of 46 males and 6 females (88 percent male and 12 percent female).

The ages of the veterans served are:

- Age 18-25: 4%
- Age 25-40: 31%
- Age 40-55: 36%
- Age 55+: 29%

The ethnic identity of participating veterans are:

- White: 66%
- Black: 24%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 4%
- Unknown: 6%

The originating jurisdictions for the RVC cases are:

- Superior Court Felonies: 20
- Municipalities: 17
- District Court Misdemeanors: 15

The majority of the cases filed in the RVC are Driving Under the Influence and Reckless Driving. The RVC also accepts a wide variety of additional charges, including domestic violence, violation of no-contact orders, theft, malicious mischief, and driving with suspended license.

All veterans who participate in the RVC screening process are screened for trauma, mental health issues, substance use, primary care needs, housing needs, employment/vocational needs, and financial resources for the purposes of linkage and treatment planning. The RVC ensures all veterans opting in to the court are registered for VHA healthcare. The VJOs assist

with the registration process when necessary. Additionally, the RVC facilitates linkage with state and local veterans programming, including the WDVA's Incarcerated Veterans Re-entry Case Management Program and King County Veterans Program (KCVP). Of the veterans opting in to the RVC, 100 percent have trauma histories. A significant number also have co-occurring substance use disorders.² While the RVC has only been in operation for approximately two years (which is the typical duration of the RVC program from opt-in to graduation), there have already been two successful graduations. Of the 52 veterans who have opted in to the RVC since June 2012, there have been 8 closed cases with bench warrants, revocations, and other causes. Minus the two who have already graduated, there are 42 participating veterans who remain actively involved in the program. This amounts to 87 percent of participants who have graduated or are currently on track to graduate. The utilization and demand for the services available through the RVC have far exceeded the initial projection, and the program's ability to successfully serve participating veterans has been noteworthy.

Section VI: Regional Veterans Court Moving Forward

The majority of veterans admitted to the RVC are able to comply with the requirements of the court and successfully graduate. The expected program outcomes are:

- No new law violations during program participation;
- No jail time and/or less jail time than would be imposed upon similarly situated defendants in mainstream court;
- Family reunification and increased family functionality; and
- Advancement with employment and/or educational opportunities.

As the program continues, the RVC will track outcomes and will continue to advise the Levy Board of our successes. As we complete our second year of operation, we are proud to report that our participation rate has far exceeded initial expectations. The RVC program has embraced the opportunity to provide a healthy, safe, productive exit from the criminal justice system for our participating veterans. We look forward to continuing this work for years to come.



² RVC does not currently have the capacity to track substance abuse data. We are in the process of considering several models for program evaluation, and intend to expand our data collection as part of that process.

Attachments

Attachment A: Opening Celebration Program for Regional Veterans Court (June 2012)

Attachment B: First Annual Celebration Program for Regional Veteran Court (November 2013)

Attachment C: Comments from Interviews with RVC Staff

**Regional Veterans Court Opening Ceremony
To Honor Our Veterans**

Please Join Us with the Pledge of Allegiance

**King County District Court Presiding Judge
Corinna Harn**

King County District Court Regional Veterans Court Judge Michael Finkle

King County Executive Dow Constantine

King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg

King County Councilmember Bob Ferguson

King County Council Chair Larry Gossett

Military Veteran and Regional Veterans Court Monitor Supervisor Scott Swaim



Regional Veterans Court Team Members

**Regional Veterans Court Judge
The Honorable Michael Finkle**

**Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Manka Dhingra, Lead Prosecutor
Natalie Walton Anderson, Prosecutor
Claire Thornton, Prosecutor
Kathy Rice, Victim Advocate**

Defense Team
Abbey Perkins, Lead Attorney
Hope Baldwin, Attorney
Heidi Rettinghouse, Attorney
Heather McIntyre, Social Worker

Milspec Court Monitor
Scott Swaim, Supervisor
Don McElderry, Monitor

Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator
Kevin Devine

Probation Mental Health Specialists
David Alber, Susan Butler, Kristin Maloy,
Jim Phoenix and Steve Wede

Regional Veterans Court Manager
Betsy Bosch



Mission Statement:

**The King County District Court's Regional Veterans Court
will serve veterans and the public by:**

- **Addressing the underlying issues that have resulted in a veteran being referred to the criminal justice system.**
- **Providing a courtroom environment that is supportive and respectful of the veteran and the victim, and conducive to reaching a successful outcome in every case.**
- **Striving to increase public safety through a collaborative, team-based approach that includes the veteran, and that incorporates individualized treatment plans, close monitoring, and creative approaches to resolve difficult issues.**

**Regional Veterans Court 1st Anniversary Celebration
To Honor Our Veterans
Please Join Us for the Pledge of Allegiance**

Speakers

**King County District Court Presiding Judge
Corinna Harn**

**King County District Court Regional Veterans Court Judge Michael
Finkle & Judge Johanna Bender**

Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson

King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert

**VA Puget Sound Health Care System Director
Michael Murphy**

Veterans Court Participant



Regional Veterans Court Team Members

November 2013

**Regional Veterans Court Judge
The Honorable Michael Finkle**

**Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Manka Dhingra, Lead Prosecutor**

**Claire Thornton, Prosecutor
Pete Desanto, Prosecutor
Kathy Rice, Victim Advocate**

**Defense Team
Abbey Perkins, Lead Attorney
Heidi Rettinghouse, Attorney
Jim Lutz, Attorney
Heather McIntyre, Social Worker
Matt Langedyke, Social Worker**

**Milspec Court Monitor
Scott Swaim, Supervisor
Robert Wilson, Court Clinician**

**Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator
Kevin Devine**

**Probation Mental Health Specialists
David Alber, Susan Butler,
Jim Phoenix and Steve Wede**

**Regional Veterans Court Manager
Betsy Bosch**



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King County

**Welcome to King County District Court
Regional Veterans Court 1st Anniversary
Celebration**

Thursday, November 7, 2013

**King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104
Courtroom E326 (3rd Floor)
12:30 pm-1:15pm**



Attachment C: Comments from Interviews with RVC Staff

We see the changes in the veterans as they progress in the program by getting jobs and going to school since starting RVC. Some are embracing mindfulness as part of their healing and as a way to deal with their anxiety rather than drinking alcohol. These veterans are working hard to clean up the wreckage of the past.

The VA is a leader in their approach to treating PTSD with Prolonged Exposure therapy and Cognitive Processing therapy. These veterans know that they have others in the same situation and are willing to support each other.

Jim Phoenix and Susan Butler, King County Probation

We know that war-zone military service can have lasting effects on the lives of our veterans and their families. For some, successful reintegration back into civilian life can be especially problematic and can lead to contact with the criminal justice system. The King County Regional Veterans Court provides a venue through which justice-involved vets can be linked to the health care services they need. The VA Puget Sound Health Care System welcomes this partnership with King County.

Kevin Devine and Diana Belletti, Veterans Justice Outreach Staff